Heartland Network and Prairie Cluster Prototype

Inventory and Monitoring – Science for Natural Resource Stewardship

Newsletter

Volume 2005, Number 1

From the Desk of the Program Coordinator

Communication In a continuing effort to foster good communication, we have produced the first edition of our quarterly newsletter. Let us know how you like it.

Planning to finish the plan Program managers at the recent NPS I&M meeting described the first twelve networks to complete their draft monitoring plans as the "bleeding" edge of the program. No doubt we picked up a few bruises from the review of our draft Monitoring Plan; however, by in large, WASO made favorable comments. In fact, WASO program managers included several sections from the HTLN plan in their collection of good examples for the remaining networks. To read through the collection visit: http://www1.nrintra.nps.gov/im/monitor/examples.htm

In a collaborative effort, each network with draft plans will shore up weak sections by drawing on good examples from other networks. The final products of all this work will consistently articulate the purpose and direction of vital signs monitoring in a manner that park managers, Congress, and decision makers in Washington can use. We plan to have the HTLN final monitoring plan completed by mid-Summer. -- Mike

Feature

The HTLN has embarked on an innovative project to share the findings and importance of the program with park staff, visitors, and decision makers. The first step involved writing a scope of work (SOW) that identified our goals, objectives, and approach to developing a communication and interpretation strategy for the HTLN. The SOW is available on our web site at http://www.nature.nps.gov/im/units/htln/education/education.htm. Eight NPS staffers, several of whom are NPS interpreters, have assisted with the SOW. We have sent the SOW to seven CESU cooperators that interpretive and regional staff recommended and expect proposals within the next few weeks. The HTLN and other NPS staff will review proposals and select a cooperator. The principal investigator will research and report on our interpretive needs and limitations and recommend the best way for HTLN to reach target audiences.

Calendar of Events

Annual meeting of TOC and BOD Dean Alexander has graciously offered to host the HTLN 2005 Annual Meeting at Hopewell Culture. The meeting will be August 9 and 10 with August 8 and 11 as travel days. The HTLN will cover travel for the BOD and one member of the technical committee from each park.

March 1-4	deer population monitoring pilot WICR
March 10-12	deer population monitoring pilot PERI
March 29-31	deer population monitoring pilot ARPO
April 18-22, 25-27	MO bladderpod monitoring WICR
May 10-16	vegetation community monitoring TAPR
May 16-25	bird community monitoring TAPR
May 23-24	vegetation community monitoring GWCA
May 31-?	invasive exotic plant pilot PERI

From the Parks

By Jesse Bolli at HOME

HOME strives to meet the provisions of the Organic Act by using science to understand its resources and to understand how management impacts those resources. The HTLN provides the data and interpretation that contributes to park managers understanding of park resources. The HTLN's scientific approach offers consistency in monitoring objectives and protocol so that managers can identify trends in the resource condition over time.

Information gained from long-term sampling (i.e. 1995 to present) of the restored tallgrass prairie was instrumental in developing quantifiable goals for the Vegetation Management Action Plan (VMAP). HTLN efforts also revealed that HOME's woodland is a rare Mesic Bur Oak Forest community. HTLN brought experts to study the woodland and assist in providing management strategies that address both woodland and

prairie communities. These strategies are reflected in the VMAP. We can be confident that management strategies are based on credible science and consistent monitoring.

Our monitoring program can even have influence outside of the park. Water quality data from macroinvertebrate sampling strengthened the argument for increased conservation upstream of HOME.

Good resource management is based upon solid scientific data and interpretation. HTLN provides that bases for both long-term and adaptive management.

Inventories

Inventories are coming down to the wire with a majority of the projects which became due in the last part of FY05 and the beginning of FY06 going through close-out. We have stayed on track for inventories and will finish at the end of this fiscal year.

NPSpecies Certification continues with $^{2}/_{3}$ of the entries verified. We have successfully entered about ½ of the data into the Biodiversity Datastore. Midwest Region GIS office, working with the HTLN, has begun work on geodatabases for most of our parks. Those databases will be completed by the end of the fiscal year.

What's New on the Web?

Check out the improved web site! The HTLN website serves as your link to HTLN activities and accomplishments. It includes more detailed information than can fit in a newsletter.

http://www1.nature.nps.gov/im/units/htln/index.htm

We've completed several updates including a new invasive plant webpage. The new page describes our monitoring approach, provides links to presentations and progress reports, and includes helpful links to invasive plant information available from states, NGOs, and federal agencies. Invasive plants:

http://www1.nature.nps.gov/im/units/htln/monitoring/projects/inp.htm.

We've also added a secure area only available to NPS users for reporting sensitive information, particularly the results of T&E species monitoring. Reports containing sensitive information:

http://www1.nrintra.nps.gov/im/units/htln/reports/reports.htm

Please continue to visit the HTLN website to stay current with our activities.

Featured Monitoring Project

Invasive, non-native plants Managers identified invasive plant monitoring as essential during the vital signs selection process. Network invasive plant monitoring objectives are to detect new invasions and to detect change in existing invasions. Network efforts focus on two prioritization issues in order to accomplish the objectives: 1) selecting the invasive plants to monitor, and 2) selecting where to monitor those plants.

The network developed a database to identify priority invasive plants. The database compiles information from national, regional, and state lists to create watch lists of the most invasive plants at the network, state, and park scales. Network and state watch lists include plants that do not occur in the park, but that may become established over time. Early detection increases the chance of eradication with minimal expenditure. The park list consists of plants that have already invaded the park. From these lists, network staff and resource managers will prioritize invasive plants to be monitored.

The network is prioritizing invasive plant monitoring locations on parks. We focus on high quality natural areas and restoration areas where invasion is probable. Roads, trails, and field edges may be a source of invasive plants. While GIS provides a starting point for identifying such areas, the expertise of resource managers will be critical to site selection. Network staff will visit resource managers at several parks this year to cooperatively finalize these prioritization decisions.

Extra! Extra!

Heartland Network receives recognition Through the hard work of I&M staff and park managers, we have made great progress this past year in completing the monitoring plan, initiating monitoring in several new parks, and laying the groundwork for an expanded monitoring effort in 2005. With the network and the prototype fully integrated, we have created a program with great potential to provide meaningful, long-term data for park managers. Others in our region and across the service have also noticed our accomplishments, as evidenced by two recent awards. Sherry Middlemis-Brown was awarded the MWR Outstanding Resource Manager award in part for her work developing our aquatic resources monitoring program and developing the HTLN interpretation plan. Mike DeBacker was recently awarded the NPS Outstanding Network Coordinator award for 2004 in recognition for his efforts to integrate the prototype program with the network and for leadership in designing our long term monitoring program.

We need your feedback We welcome comment on the contents and the value of this newsletter in keeping you up-to-date on the HTLN and activities in the parks.